

**CONGRESS RECOMMENDS BIBLE READING.**

In view of the recent discussions regarding the Bible in the public schools of Pennsylvania and elsewhere, the following facts are of special interest: During the summer some important alterations have been made at the Bible House, Seventh and Walnut streets, Philadelphia. It was necessary to remove the library temporarily, and the writer utilized the occasion by looking over some of the older versions as well as documents of importance which the society has accumulated. Among these were some records of our national Congress.

When the forefathers came to these shores the Bible came with them. Nineteen years previous to the landing on Plymouth Rock the King James Version had been given to the world, and the living oracles were unsealed to all who could procure them. The early colonists were mostly Christians, and they did all in their power to circulate the Christian's Book. In some places they went so far as to enact laws requiring every family to be furnished with a Bible. That would be a splendid thing if it could be brought to pass in this twentieth century. But copies of the sacred Book were rare in those days. At first they had to be imported from the mother country. It was not until 1743 that Sower, the famous printer of Germantown, gave to the world his edition of the Bible in the German language, and not until thirty-nine years later did the first English Bible printed in America appear. The printer and publisher was Robert Aitken, of Philadelphia.

Now it is a noteworthy fact that the founders of this great republic were God-fearing men, and they laid the foundation stones of the government upon the Bible. The First Congress met in Philadelphia, and when they had effected their organization, one of the first items of business presented was a memorial urging provision for Bibles, especially among the soldiers. Congress answered that memorial by appointing a committee to make a report on the advisability of printing an edition of thirty thousand copies of the Holy Scriptures. It was apparently the thought of some that the government should engage in the business of printing and publishing and distributing its great Magna Charta, as the Bible seemed to them to be. The report of that committee can be seen at the Bible House. Upon investigation, they found that it would be impracticable to procure in this country the necessary paper and types and presses for the printing suggested, and so they recommended Congress—"the use of the Bible being so universal, and its importance so great,—to direct the Committee on Commerce to import at the expense of Congress, 20,000 English Bibles from Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere into the different States of the Union." This report was adopted by Congress, September 11, 1777. Its immense significance lies in the fact that at the very beginning of our national life it gave public recognition to the existence of the Christian's God and public endorsement of the Bible. Let us not hesitate, in view of these and similar facts, to assert ourselves as a Christian nation.

For four long years, while the cruel war raged fiercely, it was found impossible to import a single English Bible, and no one knew how long the san-

guinary struggle would continue, and so once again Congress appointed a committee to devise ways and means for furnishing the people with the life-giving Word. They felt that at such a time they must have a Bible. Not far from old Independence Hall, at the Pope's Head on Market street, three doors above the old London Coffee House, was the printing press of Robert Aitken. He had just issued the first American Bible in the English language. After careful investigation the committee brought in the following report, which was adopted by Congress in 1882: "Resolved, That the United States, in Congress assembled, highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken as subservient to the interests of religion, and being satisfied of the care and accuracy of the execution of the work, recommend the edition to the inhabitants of the United States."

Out from the dust of ages there comes a voice which seems to say: "This is a nation founded on the Bible. The highest legislative body earnestly enjoins upon all the people of the United States the reverent study of God's Word. We are a Bible nation." God help us to be true to our priceless heritage. May the day never come when the Bible shall be crowded out of its rightful place. Those noble men of old believed it and loved it and honored it. A few years after the meeting of that First Congress, twenty-five devout citizens of Pennsylvania came together in Philadelphia and formed the first Bible society in this country for the dissemination of the Scriptures. For all these years, this society has stood for that single purpose, and is stronger today than ever before. Other similar organizations have sprung up all over the country and have become mighty powers for good. Let us who love our Bible honor these noble traditions of the founders of our beloved land. God forbid the day when the Bible shall be banished from our public schools, when it shall cease to be the solemn witnesser of the sacred oath in our courts of justice; when it shall no longer have free course and be glorified. Its foes are ever alert. Let every Christian patriot spring to the task of scattering the Written Revelation of the Living God into every heart and every home.—The Westminster.

**PRAYER.**

"Prayer is the rope up in the belfry; we pull it, and it rings the bell up in heaven," so said Christmas Evans, the great Welsh preacher. To know that the bell rings, and to have its music flood our lives, this is indeed a great comfort to Christians. What a never-failing source of comfort prayer is! The history of each individual Christian and of the amount of comfort and blessedness he has received could almost accurately be recorded by a statement of his habits of prayer. Children in their disappointments and youths in making their choices, mothers in their careworn lives and fathers in their toil, statesmen in their heavy tasks and pastors with their perplexities, Christians of all ages and all classes and in every variety of circumstances have tested and attested the wonderful comforting power there is in prayer.—Rev. G. B. F. Halllock, D.D.